

THE ORGANIZERS OF THIS WORKSHOP

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you in this workshop to discuss "Development of digital open agricultural education resources".

I understand that the main objective of this training is to build capacity in the production of Free/ Libre Open Resources in Agriculture using friendly open source Web 2.0 Technologies such as the Wiki – Media.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Agriculture is the backbone of many African Economies and Kenya is not an exception. In Kenya, Agriculture contributes 24 percent directly to the GDP and 27 percent indirectly through linkages with industry & service-related sectors. The sector also accounts for 80 percent of employment, contributes to 60 percent of export earnings and 45 percent of the government revenue. The role of agriculture in the Kenyan economy is therefore quite significant.

Information exchange in the Agriculture sector has been predominantly manual in the last decade but at present the Sector has adopted Information and Communication Technology (ICT) though at a slow pace due to challenges occasioned by lack of resources, high poverty levels, poor ICT infrastructure and low electricity supply in the rural areas. Lack of skills and capacity, coupled with low Computer illiteracy levels are also a hindrance to the adoption of the technology.

As you are aware, the Government is working hard to address these challenges and we hope that ICT will be widely adopted in the near future.

The Ministry of Agriculture has been able to disseminate and communicate agricultural information through the web (www.kilimo.go.ke) and email

connections to the Provincial and District officers. Some of the information disseminated includes the Daily Market Information. District reports have also been received and analyzed through the use of ICT.

The Ministry has also initiated the use of Information Desks or Information Booths as a tool for agricultural information dissemination. There are over 1500 such desks that are manned by competent extension workers. The officers collect relevant agricultural extension messages from research, the internet and any other appropriate source for delivery to the farmers. The booths are placed at market places or any other convenient place accessible to the farmers.

Farmers have also been able to access market information through the use of mobile telephone. This has been done through collaboration with the Kenya Agricultural Commodity Exchange (KACE). In addition to this the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development through NALEP will very soon be launching the **National Farmers' Information Service (NAFIS)**: this is an electronic voice mail service that will provide extension information to farmers through telephony. Officers will be required to type the extension packages on an enterprise into the computer. The computer converts the information into a voice in Kiswahili or English. A phone number is allocated for every enterprise. On ringing the number for the specific enterprise, the typed information is relayed to the farmer in the name of the area extension worker who is answering the call. The NAFIS will enable the Ministries to increase coverage from the current 1.7 million farmers to 3.7 million farmers annually. Kilimo booths will be installed at all the information desks countrywide for farmers to access NAFIS.

The Strategy for the Revitalization of Agriculture (SRA) has identified ICT as one of the components that will contribute to the agricultural development. To this end, an ICT task force through the Agriculture Sector Coordination Unit (ASCU) has been formed to explore areas that will require attention in the rolling out of the ICT, including the policy that will govern it.

The Department of Planning and Information Services (DPIS) in the Ministry of Agriculture, is also exploring ways and means of creating an Agricultural Information Portal.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

If these efforts are harnessed I am sure we would achieve the "Development of digital open agricultural education resources".

With these few remarks, it is my pleasure to wish you fruitful deliberations during these three days as I declare this workshop officially opened.

THANK YOU.